

Job insecurity and innovative work behavior: Grit's role as a mediator

Pricilla Mourine Ham¹, and Alice Salendu²

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of grit as a mediator in the relationship between job insecurity and innovative work behavior in employees affected by policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is a quantitative study using an online questionnaire (Google Form) to collect data. The measuring tools used are the Innovative Work Behavior Scale, the Multidimensional Qualitative Job Insecurity Scale (MQJIS), and the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). The participants of this study are employees in Indonesia who work in companies that implement new policies due to COVID-19. Through a nonprobability sampling technique, data were obtained for as many as 739 participants. The mediation test was carried out using the Macro PROCESS from Hayes model 4. The results showed that grit acted as a mediator in the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior ($B = -0.09$, 95% CI [-0.13, -0.06]). Therefore, the results of this study can be used as a reference for companies to involve in measuring employee grit in the human resource management process.

Keywords

employees, grit, innovative work behavior, job insecurity

Introduction

Indonesia experienced a crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. The company's success in resolving the crisis era does not guarantee the future success of the company because a diametric world will emerge at the end of the pandemic (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). Therefore, the company needs to prepare and arrange a long-term strategy by identifying the action needed to raise the company up after the pandemic (Lath *et al.*, 2020). Innovation is one of the companies' solution in facing the crisis and the new normal (Finn, 2020; Lang, 2020; Swoboda, 2020). In a business and economic environment that is rapidly changing and unstable, innovation helps the company to grow and survive (Niesen *et al.*, 2018; Liu *et al.*, 2020). Innovation also assists the company in facing challenges rapidly and effectively (Etikariena & Muluk, 2014).

Employees play an essential role in innovation due to their potential in bringing and developing innovative ideas into the company (Ham & Etikariena, 2021; Niesen *et al.*, 2018). Binnewies & Gromer (2012) stated that innovative employees help companies adapt to environmental conditions and take advantage of good opportunities that are profitable for the company. Innovative employees are also seen as a source of ideas, responsible for implementing ideas, and trying to make innovations when unsatisfied (De Spiegelare *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, some companies consider innovation part of their vision and mission (Etikariena & Muluk, 2014). In addition, Scott & Bruce (1994) stated that companies started incorporating innovation into their employee job descriptions.

Employee innovation or innovative work behavior is defined as a multilevel process (multistage process) that involves different activities and behaviors at each level

(Scott & Bruce, 1994). Innovative work behavior starts with awareness of a problem and creates ideas or solutions related to the problem (idea generation). The ideas created can be new ideas or the adoption of previous ideas. Then, employees collect support ideas from their colleagues (promotion ideas) until the idea can be implemented and realized as models or archetypes that are useful for the company (idea realization). Moreover, innovative work behavior is a nonsquential level so that employees can simultaneously be involved in a combination of different activities or behaviors (Janssen, 2000).

After observing the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on companies and organizations, job insecurity is one factor influencing innovative work behavior that employees are vulnerable to experience. Job insecurity can be classified into quantitative and qualitative (De Witte, 2005). Quantitative job insecurity refers to the continuity of the job, while qualitative job insecurity refers to insecurity regarding the sustainability of the job's aspects (De Witte, 2005). The job's aspects are job contents, job environment conditions, job system conditions, and social relations (Brondino *et al.*, 2020). De Witte (2005) states that job insecurity does not always cause employees to be unemployed (quantitative). The number of employees who are not guaranteed security will be greater than the number of employees who lose their jobs. Therefore, referring to the phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study will focus on job insecurity due to

^{1,2} Faculty of Psychology, University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

Corresponding author:

Ham, Faculty of Psychology, University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
Email: pricilla.mourine@ui.ac.id

changes in the work system that have an impact on work locations, colleague relationship, salary reduction policies, and the content of work that causes the growth of insecurity for employees and their effect on employee innovation activities.

The relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior needs the aspect of motivation as a mediator (Montani *et al.*, 2021). This relationship can be studied by the job demand-resource model (JD-R model). In the JD-R Model, job demands are defined as an aspect of work that requires effort related to physical and psychological expenses (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016). Qualitative job insecurity can be classified into job demand, barriers (hindrance), and positive challenges (LePine *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, job demands that act as barriers are related to low motivation because individuals are not sure that their efforts can overcome these demands. When employees feel less motivated, it will affect their behavior at work or their work performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016).

Qualitative job insecurity negatively correlates with grit (Shin *et al.*, 2019). This case is the same as the motivational aspect (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Grit is defined as persistence and a strong interest in achieving long-term goals (Duckworth *et al.*, 2007). Grit is also seen as a future motivational orientation that involves persistence and a strong interest (Duckworth *et al.*, 2007). Employees who feel insecure about their jobs lose control and feel wasted. The feeling causes employees to be hampered and experience a decreased motivation to work. Qualitative job insecurity decreases individuals' encouragement and motivation to achieve their goals by giving negative emotions of insecurity. Therefore, an employee's qualitative work insecurity can be a work demand that prevents them from achieving their best operational performance.

The persistence and interest of individuals in achieving their set goals can be realized by the involvement of an individual's innovative work behavior. Innovative work behavior is a multilevel stage involving activities from creating to realizing ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000). Therefore, it takes persistence and long-term commitment to achieve the realization stage idea. In addition, research conducted by Mooradian *et al.* (2016) also shows a relationship between two aspects of grit (consistency of interested and persistence of effort) and innovative work behavior. Furthermore, grit is known to have a positive relationship with innovative work behavior (Suendarti *et al.*, 2020). This is because innovation is often considered a risky task, so once the innovation goals are set, perseverance is needed to achieve them (Mooradian *et al.*, 2016).

Based on this explanation, this study was conducted to examine and explain the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior through aspects of motivation (grit) as a mediator. This research is expected to be a reference for companies to encourage employees' innovative work behavior. Through this research, companies are also expected to be aware of the impact of qualitative job insecurity on employees' grit and innovative work behavior. Several intervention considerations can be carried out to overcome qualitative and grit employees. This study hypothesizes that grit acts as a mediator in the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior.

Table 1. Participant Demography Data Description

Demography Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Men	320	43%
Women	419	57%
Age		
≤ 30 years	463	63%
31 - 44 years	177	24%
≥ 45 years	99	13%
Job Status		
Permanent employees	547	74%
Contract employees	182	25%
Others	10	1%
Position		
Staff	498	67%
Supervisor	140	19%
Manager	90	12%
Others	11	1%
Last job working period		
≤ 2 years	292	40%
> 2 years - ≤ 10 years	335	45%
> 10 years	112	15%
Overall tenure		
≤ 2 years	112	15%
> 2 years - ≤ 10 years	414	56%
> 10 tahun	213	29%

Method

Research Subject

The Indonesian employees who worked in companies that implemented changes or new policies due to COVID-19 were the participants of this research. The policies are the implementation of work from the home system (WFH), shifting, termination of employment (PHK), laid off without being given work wages (unpaid leave), salary reductions, and other policies implemented by the company in dealing with COVID-19. Sampling was carried out by the accidental sampling technique based on the ease of accessing the sampling population (Kumar, 2019).

The age classification is carried out based on the age category of employees, namely, trial stage (≤ 30 years), stabilization stage (31-44 years old), and maintenance stage (≥ 45 years) (Morrow & McElroy, 1987). The last job working period classification is classified as 2 years (orientation), > 2 years - 10 years (growth), and >10 years (plateau) (Morrow & McElroy, 1987). Then, the working period classification is classified into 2 years (establishment), > 2 years - 10 years (advancement), and >10 years (occupational tenure) (Mount, 1984 in Morrow & McElroy (1987)).

In terms of gender, 57% of participants were women. Then, in terms of age, this study was dominated by participants at the trial stage (63%). Based on employment status, 74% of the participants are permanent employees. The participants of this study were also dominated by staff, who were 67% of the participants. Furthermore, based on the last job working period and the amount of working period, this study was dominated by participants who had worked for > 2 years - 10 years (growth and advancement).

Research Instrument

All measuring instruments used in this study were adapted into Indonesian according to the five stages of cross-cultural adaptation proposed by [Beaton et al. \(2000\)](#). They are translation, synthesis, back translation, expert committee review, and pretesting. The measuring tool for innovative work behavior is adapted from the scale developed by [Janssen \(2000\)](#), which consists of nine items representing the stages of idea creation, promotion, and realization. All items on this measuring instrument are favorable so that all items can be added up directly to obtain a total score for innovative work behavior. Reliability measurement of innovative work behavior measuring tools is done by looking at the internal consistency through the coefficient Cronbach's Alpha. The measuring tool for innovative work behavior has excellent internal consistency according to [DeVellis \(2016\)](#), namely, = 0.95, with a range of corrected item-total correlations ranging from 0.72 – 0.86.

Grit instrument measurement is adapted from the Short Grit Scale (Grit -S) developed by [Duckworth & Quinn \(2009\)](#) and consists of 8 items representing two dimensions of grit, namely, consistency of interest and persistence of effort. This measuring instrument has items favorable for all dimensions of business persistence and unfavorable items for all dimensions of consistency of interest. Therefore, the unfavorable item is reverse scored so that the total grit items can be added to obtain a total score. Grit instrument measurement has a good, reasonably internal consistency, according to [DeVellis \(2016\)](#), namely, = 0.779, with a range of values of corrected item-total correlation ranging from 0.343 – 0.602. Therefore, the determination tool can be said to be reliable

The qualitative job insecurity measurement tool is adapted from the Multidimensional Qualitative Job Insecurity Scale (MQJIS) developed by [Brondino et al. \(2020\)](#). This measuring tool consists of four dimensions, namely, job content, work environment conditions, work system conditions, and social relations, with a total of 8 items. Two items represent each dimension. All items measuring qualitative job insecurity are favorable, so a direct summation of the scores for each item can be made. The MQJIS measuring instrument has excellent internal consistency, according to [DeVellis \(2016\)](#), namely, = 0.827, with a range of corrected item-total correlation values, which range from 0.416 – 0.661. Therefore, the MJQS measuring instrument is reliable in measuring qualitative job insecurity.

In general, 25 statement items can be responded to using a Likert scale, i.e., 1 = never did, 2 = had started doing occasionally, 3 = started doing quite often, 4 = did quite often, 5 = almost always did, and 6 = always did for innovative work behavior measurement tools, and 1 = Very Not suitable, 2 = not suitable, 3 = slightly inappropriate, 4 = moderately suitable, 5 = suitable, and 6 = very suitable for measuring instruments grit and qualitative job insecurity.

Data Analysis Method

The collected data will be processed quantitatively using SPSS version 23. In the initial stage, reviewing and cleaning of the collected data will be performed to ensure the completeness of the data and the absence of data outliers. Furthermore,

descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine the characteristics of research participants through demographic data and general descriptions of the three research variables. Then, a hypothesis test was conducted, namely, the mediation test using the Macro Process program by Andrew F. Hayes, namely, model 4.

Research Procedure

This study uses a quantitative survey method by distributing online questionnaires. This research has also passed the ethical review, as evidenced by issuing the Certificate of Passing the Research Ethics Review No: 911/FPsi.KomiteEtik/PDP.04.00/2020. In the initial stage, a literature study was carried out regarding the phenomena related to the research variables. Based on the literature study, research hypotheses were compiled along with collecting measuring instruments. The measuring instrument was then adapted into Indonesian to suit the research context.

The data collection process was carried out on November 4-15, 2020, using an online questionnaire through Google Form. A total of 804 data points were collected. Furthermore, data filtration is carried out following the criteria for this research sample, and a test is also carried out on outliers. Ultimately, the data that can be used for this study amounted to 739. This study involves three variables consisting of the dependent variable, namely, innovative work behavior; the independent variable, namely, qualitative job insecurity; and the mediator variable, namely, grits. The conceptual model of this research is shown in [Figure 1](#).

Result

In this research, the researcher conducted a reliability test, assumption test, analysis of demographic data, and variables correlation test as preliminary analysis. All variables in this study have a good Cronbach's alpha coefficient, namely, >.7 ([Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994](#)). Then, all assumption tests are also fulfilled, including the linearity test, homoscedasticity test, multicollinearity test, and independent error.

Based on [Table 2](#), it is known that several demographic factors have a significant correlation with the variables of innovative work behavior, qualitative job insecurity, and grit. In innovative work behavior, the factor of gender or gender and position has a significant relationship. In qualitative job insecurity, age, position, last working period, and overall tenure have a significant negative relationship. Meanwhile, gender and work status significantly positively correlate with qualitative job insecurity. Thus, age, position, last working period, and overall tenure have a significant positive relationship with grit. Gender and employment status factors negatively correlate with grit.

Furthermore, a hypothesis test was conducted with a mediation test to determine the role of grit as a mediator in the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior. In addition, control was also carried out on demographic variables: age, gender, job status, position, current position tenure, and overall tenure.

Hypothesis testing was carried out with the Macro Process from Hayes model 4, which described the indirect effect of the mediator variable using bootstrapping. The mediation analysis results showed that the total effect (c) of qualitative

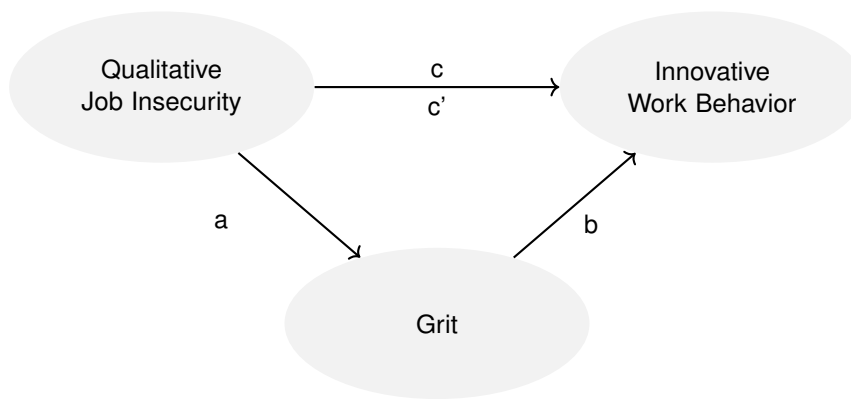


Figure 1. Research model

Table 2. Statistical and Variable Correlation Description

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age	31.52	9.22	-								
Gender			-.19**	-							
Employment Status			-.17**	.04	-						
Position			.24**	-.10**	.07	-					
Last Job tenure			.56**	-.14**	-.26**	.07	-				
Overall Tenure			.69**	-.14**	-.24**	.21**	.59**	-			
Innovative work Job behavior	4.27	0.96	.03	-.19**	.02	.18**	.03	.04	-		
Qualitative Job insecurity	3.17	1.06	-.34**	.11**	.13**	-.15	-.24**	-.29**	.02	-	
Grit	4.21	0.79	.29**	-.13**	-.03	.13**	.16**	.24**	.22*	-.43**	-

N= 739. **p<0.01

Table 3. Result of the Qualitative Job Insecurity and Innovation Work Behavior Relationship Mediation Test

Track	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI
a	-0.37	0.03	-0.33	-0.22
b	0.26	0.05	0.25	0.46
c	0.05	0.04	-0.02	0.01
c'	0.15	0.04	0.07	0.23

job insecurity on innovative work behavior was B=0.05, 95% CI (-0.02, 0.01). The total effect consists of the indirect effect of qualitative job insecurity on innovative work behavior through grit B= -0.09, 95% CI (-0.13, -0.06), and the direct effect (c') of qualitative job insecurity on innovative work behavior is B=0.15, 95% CI (0.07, 0.23). Therefore, it can be concluded that grit fully mediates the relationship between job insecurity and innovative work behavior.

Discussion

This research found the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior through grit as a mediator. These findings also support the findings of Shin et al. (2019), who found a negative relationship between qualitative job insecurity and grit. As employees feel insecure about the continuity of their work aspect, their difficulties in feeling grit are increasing. This happens because employees feel that they have lost control over aspects of their work and feel that their efforts will be wasted. Negative emotions from qualitative job insecurity inhibit employees' persistence, motivation, and interest in achieving long-term goals.

Moreover, when employees are less motivated or feel grit, it will impact their difficulties in carrying out innovative

work behavior. The research results also support the research conducted by Suendarti et al. (2020), which found a positive relationship between grit and innovative work behavior. Employees who lack persistence and interest in achieving long-term goals will have more difficulty engaging in innovative work behavior. Remembering that innovative work behavior consists of stages starting from the process of idea creation to the realization of ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000), employees need to have grit in realizing it. Mooradian et al. (2016) also added that innovative work behavior is seen as a risky activity, so it takes persistence from employees to achieve their goals.

In general, the results of this research are also in line with the findings of Montani et al. (2021), who found a relationship between job insecurity and innovative work behavior through grit as a mediator. Furthermore, employees who feel insecure regarding aspects of their work can reduce their movement, and motivation grit requires employees to engage in innovative work behavior. Qualitative job insecurity hampers employees' capacity to achieve long-term goals because employees tend to have difficulty developing their work projects. It will affect the tendency of employees to bring innovative work behavior up because it requires employees to be aware and create ideas for available improvement opportunities.

Furthermore, related to the demographic data in this research, it is known that innovative work behavior has a significant positive relationship with gender. This result is in line with Bibi & Afsar (2020) Bibi and Afsar's (2020) research, which described that male leaders show higher innovative work behaviors than women. Men tend to have more courage and manageable emotions and handle stress well while realizing innovative work behaviors that consist of

several activities. Then, this research also found a significant relationship between position and innovative work behavior.

This research is inseparable from several limitations that need to be considered. First, this research was conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, this study is limited to measuring job insecurity qualitatively. Third, this research is limited in knowing the role of grit as a motivational aspect and its relation to job insecurity and innovative work behavior. Fourth, in this research, the researcher adapted measuring tools for innovative work behavior, grit, and job insecurity. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further studies with other samples of participants.

Conclusion and Implication

Conclusion

Based on the research, it can be concluded that grit is a full mediator in the relationship between qualitative job insecurity and innovative work behavior for employees affected by changes or policies due to COVID-19.

Implication

This research is expected to enrich the study of innovative work behavior, qualitative job insecurity, and grit. Therefore, based on the limitations of this study, further research is expected to examine qualitative and quantitative job insecurity to obtain a more comprehensive picture, especially regarding work insecurity in working conditions—new normal. Further research can also involve the role of mediators and other moderators in looking at the relationship between job insecurity and innovative work behavior to enrich research related to this matter. Then, further research can use the measuring instruments used in this study so that the measuring instruments in this study can be reviewed, especially in other larger samples.

The practical implication for companies is that they need to consider grit employees' measurement so that employees can bring innovative work behaviors up, especially during a pandemic that increases employees' insecurity. Companies are advised to consider grit employees and measure the level of grit in the human resource management process. This is because grit is one of the factors that predicts the success of employee performance, so Jordan *et al.* (2019) stated that grit can be used as a consideration in the employee recruitment and selection process, employee training by targeting the improvement of aspects of grit, and one of the aspects in employee performance appraisal measurement. Grit measurement during the human resource management process, the company can anticipate employees who have low grit.

This research is also expected to benefit the company in building awareness about the importance of innovation and employee innovative work behavior improvement. Acknowledging that qualitative job insecurity is an affective aspect that involves feelings and affects individual work motivation and behavior, companies are expected to provide free counseling services for employees—especially those with a relatively high level of qualitative job insecurity. Counseling aims to assist employees in relieving employee fear, job insecurity, and other emotional aspects related to job insecurity.

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